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- Judiciary (ranking member)
- Transportation
(assistant ranking member)
- Financial Institutions and Insurance



A Report from the 2010 Legislature

to my constituents in the **5th Legislative District**

Dear friends and neighbors,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and that you are looking forward to the summer months.

With the 2010 regular and special legislative sessions concluded, it is a good time to touch base with you on what has happened in your citizens' Legislature the last few months. We all lead busy lives, so I hope this newsletter is a convenient snapshot of the issues for you.

As you may have heard, the legislative sessions were dominated by the state's \$2.8 billion operating budget shortfall. Two different approaches emerged to address this problem. The first set of solutions, which I supported, sought to create jobs, prioritize state government, reform the budget process, and avoid new tax increases. The second approach, which prevailed, raised taxes, relied on one-time federal dollars, used dedicated state fund transfers, drew down reserves, and made marginal cuts to state government.

The budget decisions were no doubt difficult, but there is no reason it should have taken the majority party an additional 30 days to finalize their plans. As a result, the special legislative session cost taxpayers an extra \$247,000. This failure of leadership was costly and unfortunate.

While the budget took center stage, significant progress was made in the areas of education, public safety, transportation projects, and support of veterans. Many good, bipartisan measures passed and I highlight some of them in this newsletter.

Although the legislative sessions are over, I am your state representative throughout the year. Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance, or if you have any questions or ideas to pass along. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

A blue ink signature of Jay Rodne.

Jay Rodne

Representative Jay Rodne

FILLING THE \$2.8 BILLION STATE OPERATING BUDGET HOLE

Structural problems in budget not addressed

When lawmakers arrived in Olympia in January, the state faced a \$2.8 billion budget shortfall. Soon thereafter, two different approaches came to light to address the problem.

The majority party and governor made it clear they were unwilling to work in a collaborative, bipartisan manner to make sensible reductions in the size and scope of state government, lower costs and promote budget reforms. Rather than face the difficult task of prioritizing state spending within existing revenues, the majority party opted to raise taxes, rely on one-time federal dollars, use dedicated state fund transfers, draw down the rainy-day fund, and make marginal cuts to state government.

This approach does not address the structural budget problems facing our state and will set us up for a large deficit next year. The fact remains: the state is still spending more than it takes in, and the gap could be around \$3 billion in the next budget cycle.

The second set of solutions, which I supported, said "no" to tax increases and "yes" to improving our state business climate. I would have also restructured state programs and services, and reformed the budget process. Nearly all of these solutions were rejected by the majority party.

Priorities of government model must be restored

We must return to a bipartisan, priorities of government model used successfully by Gov. Gary Locke and Sen. Dino Rossi in 2003. They knew, and a majority of those in the Legislature understood, the state must focus on education, public safety and the protection of its most vulnerable.

Each dollar the state spends on running liquor stores, a print shop and large insurance companies is money taken away from true priorities.



Rep. Jay Rodne with St. Joseph School students

SUSPENDING THE TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT (*INITIATIVE 960*)

Will of the people, bipartisanship abandoned

Voters passed the Taxpayer Protection Act, I-960, in 2007. Among other things, this initiative required a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to raise taxes. The majority party and governor decided to push this requirement aside through the passage of **Senate Bill 6130**, which cleared the way for them to raise taxes by a simple-majority vote. I joined in bipartisan opposition to this measure.

New tax increases passed this year will add to the costs of services associated with accountants, architects, attorneys, banks, credit cards, dentists, direct sellers, graphic artists, hairstylists, optometrists, real estate agents, and veterinarians. People will also have to pay more for their beer, bottled water, candy, canned meats, cigarettes, gum, and soda.

I am concerned these new tax increases will hurt struggling families and small businesses, and put more people out of work. There is a better, more sensible, way forward.

An alternative to new tax increases

An alternative to new tax increases is to reform state government in meaningful ways that reduce the costs of programs and services. For example, privatizing state liquor stores, allowing competition in our workers' compensation insurance system, reforming our state's Basic Health Plan, and outsourcing printing and other state services. I also believe state employees need to pay more toward their benefits packages.

These solutions had bipartisan support, but unfortunately they were not allowed to be brought forward for votes.

The bottom line is our state budget is unsustainable. We must restore fiscal responsibility to state government by reforming our budget process and reining in spending. We cannot continue the business as usual mindset because, if we do, we risk bankrupting our children's future. Unfortunately, when the majority chose to pay for state employee pay raises by increasing taxes, it signaled the preservation of the status quo in Olympia.



2010 Legislative Report

5th District

ENSURING OUR COMMUNITIES ARE SAFE

New measures inspired by incidents

Horrific tragedies involving the loss of law enforcement officials last year were stark reminders of the dangers our communities face. In response, the Legislature adopted a package of public safety and law enforcement support measures. A lot of bipartisan collaboration went into the following bills, and I am proud to have supported all of them:

- **House Bill 2777** increases penalties for repeat domestic violence offenders.
- **House Bill 2717** prevents outings of the criminally insane from state facilities, except for special circumstances.
- **House Bill 2625** allows judges latitude to determine if bail is appropriate for offenders arrested on felony charges.
- **House Bill 2424** updates child exploitation laws to reflect use of the Internet to view and share sexually explicit photos.
- **Senate Bill 6476** increases penalties for those who abuse children by selling them into prostitution, and provides specialized services for children who have been abused through sex trafficking.
- **House Joint Resolution 4220** would allow more discretion for judges to deny bail to suspects facing a life sentence and who are deemed dangerous to the community. Since this would involve a state constitutional amendment, voters will have the final say in November.



IMPROVING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Major K-12 education reforms move forward

Too many children are failing or dropping out of school. Additionally, some who are graduating are not ready for the next level of education or career training. We can, and must, do better for our students as they prepare to enter a competitive global economy.

In the 2009 legislative session, a first step in major education reform was taken. Through the passage of **House Bill 2261**, a roadmap to define and fund basic education was created. The legislation, which I voted for, created a blueprint for how we will fund our public schools in the future and was the end product of bipartisan workgroups.

This year, a second step was taken through the passage of **House Bill 2776**. This measure, which I also voted for, sets in motion recommendations from the Quality Education Council – a bipartisan group tasked with implementing the concepts outlined in **House Bill 2261**. These important reforms include:

- implementing a new pupil transportation funding method;
- accelerating the workgroups focused on local levy and teacher compensation issues;
- requiring a phase-in of smaller classes of 17 students in K-3rd grade by the 2015-16 school year;
- ensuring increased funding for maintenance and operations (costs the state currently provides about half the funding for); and
- establishing a new prototypical school-funding model that will simplify the budget process and increase transparency.

The vital steps taken the last two years put our state on a path to meaningful education reform. Although we made significant progress, we must continue our efforts to ensure that we live up to our paramount duty as a state.



RODNE District No. 5

Representative Jay Rodne

HELPING VETERANS

Disabled Veterans Assistance Account established

I co-sponsored bipartisan legislation signed into law that creates a new state account dedicated to funding services for veterans facing financial hardship. **House Bill 1876** establishes the Disabled Veterans Assistance Account, which will be funded through voluntary donations from the public at retailers around the state.

The account will focus on helping veterans in need with medical equipment, home and vehicle repairs, service dogs, and food and shelter. It will be administered by our Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Because of their sacrifice and service, I feel we must be committed to helping our young and disabled veterans returning from overseas duty reintegrate back into society.



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